

From academia to *hackademia*: Hamid Dabashi as native informer

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...Notwithstanding its poses and sentimental outbursts, seldom, if ever, is the academic corps a disobedient lot...Academia in the West is for the most part indentured to Big Business...

~ Guido Giacomo Preparata, *'The Ideology of Tyranny'*.

...they [i.e. the native informers] can feign authority while telling their conquerors not what they need to know but what they want to hear. (In return, American and European liberals call them “voices of dissent”.) Faced with the Islamophobic conditions of their new homes, they have learned the art of simultaneously acknowledging and denying their Muslim origins. They speak English with an accent that confirms their authenticity to their white interlocutors...Natives informing on their brothers and sisters back in the field as a way of ingratiating themselves with their white masters have been a major character type since at least the time of Harriet Beecher Stowe, a pathology created by the condition of coloniality...They have undertaken their activities in the honorable name of defending human rights, women's rights, and civil rights of Muslims themselves...The blatant manner in which these native informers have demonized their own cultures and societies is made possible by the protection they enjoy when they relocate to the centers of Western European and North American power...[those] who use the muddy waters of war to advance their careers ...or to become spin doctors on current affairs. These kind of activities, in effect, all serve to rationalize and justify US carnage in the Muslim world...

~ Hamid Dabashi, *'Brown Skin, White Masks'*.

From respected Columbia scholar to geopolitical hack

For some time Hamid Dabashi held considerable influence over the subaltern intellectual scene among the Iranian diaspora in the West as well as a generation of leftwing and progressive Iranian thinkers and activists inside Iran itself. His *Theology of Discontent* is still considered to be one of the finest scholarly references on the roots of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. His 2011 reprise and updating of Franz Fanon's classic *Black Skin, White Masks* as *Brown Skins, White Masks* is an intellectual *tour de force* that would certainly make the revolutionary Martinican proud. Even his recent *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (much like his earlier *Post-Orientalism*) should in its own right be considered an important contribution to critical theory and therefore a significant expansion and augmentation on the theoretical line of investigation begun by Edward Said.

Be that as it may, in the geopolitical equation of things, over the past few years Hamid Dabashi has increasingly blown his own credibility with a few of the eyebrow raising causes and positions he has aligned himself with and thus, at least on that front, he has made himself into a brand name that can no longer be trusted.

Dabashi and the Arab Spring

Since the outset of the so-called Arab Spring (and some would argue even earlier from June 2009 with some of his biased spin on events in Iran, not to mention his central role as one of the leading intellectual figures of the Green movement in North America) all has not been well with the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. The sheer mendacity of some of his articulated views in print, and more specifically in a recent Al Jazeera op-ed (entitled '*Iran has a Duty to Take in Syrian Refugees*' 11 September 2015 [1]), leaves one utterly speechless. It leaves one speechless because in such pieces Hamid Dabashi, as someone who ought to know better, has literally transformed himself into the very native informer antitype which he has elsewhere rightfully lambasted.

To be clear, these positions by Dabashi cannot be attributed to mere naiveté alone, although that is certainly present in abundance. Rather it is a clear cut case of pure intellectual skulduggery, and one which has also become symptomatic of much of the discourse of mainstream segments of the First World Left regarding conflicts in the post-Arab Spring Middle East, particularly when called upon to identify the real culprits and the true locus of blame for the origination, escalation and perpetuation of these conflicts.

Dabashi's own 2012 publication *The Arab Spring* is a veritable testament to the sort of irresponsible, pie-in-the-sky, hypocritical naiveté of this particular subculture of establishment First World leftists entrenched inside the Western Academy with their muddled (and often totally incorrect) theorizing and deliberate misreadings: erroneous geopolitical theorizing and misreadings with consequences (due to how they form popular perceptions and consensus) which have played right into the hands of Empire and its agendas at every juncture time and again. Yet any explanation as to how the author of *Islamic Liberation Theology* can get it so wrong about the Syrian conflict, Iran's involvement in it and the current refugee crisis arising from that (together with possible solutions) cannot be sought in Dabashi's purported naiveté alone. The explanation lies elsewhere.

Hackery

Let me break it down further: Hamid Dabashi has incessantly demonstrated a proclivity to bias and outright political animus towards both the Iranian and Syrian states throughout the entire course of the present, ongoing conflict in the Middle East (as well as against the whole Resistance Axis, which includes the Lebanese Hezbollah). The form of this animus often manifests in nearly identical terms as to how the US, the Israeli, Turkish and Gulf establishments (not to mention the vocal *gusano* sub-culture of Iranian expatriates residing in Tehrangeles or the Beltway) have it in for Iran and Syria.

While his views on these issues are largely communicated through the language, contexts, subtexts and lens of deconstruction, critical theory and postmodernism, when all is said and done, there is nothing substantially different to how Dabashi addresses the conflict in Syria and Iran's role in it (at least in his Al Jazeera opinion pieces) that is substantially at odds with the official misinformation/disinformation spiel coming out of the US State Department, Whitehall, the corrupt Gulf kingdoms, the mainstream Western corporate *presstitute* media, or the assorted pro-Atlanticist NGOs and think-tanks who are systematically undermining Iran and Syria on a daily basis. In short, where the Syrian conflict and Iran are concerned, since 2011 Dabashi has stood with Empire, whatever else he pretends to, and thereby he has made himself into an imperial mouthpiece and propagandist, and hence a native informer of Empire via its Qatari franchise Al Jazeera.

Dabashi's obfuscations on the Syrian refugee crisis and Iran

Now, halfway through his 11 September 2015 Al Jazeera op-ed, Dabashi asserts: "There is one glaring case of a Muslim country that is heavily involved in Syria but

has yet to accept a single Syrian refugee, and that is the Islamic Republic of Iran... not a single refugee has been admitted to Iran. Why not?"

Contrary to Dabashi's categorical claim, the truth of the matter is that Iran has in fact accepted Syrian refugees -- and since 2011. Nor, unlike Dabashi's Qatari media benefactor whose government has officially shut its doors to these refugees, has Iran refused any present influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the war from coming to Iran. Scores of Syrians have been coming to Iran since 2011 because Iran holds no visa restrictions for Syrians. As one gentleman indicated on Dabashi's own Facebook fan page on 11 September (a comment shortly thereafter deleted by whoever manages the page) -- with a dozen more people confirming the claims of the aforementioned (with their comments being deleted as well) -- numerous Syrians can be found in Qom, Isfahan, Tehran and other major Iranian cities: Syrians who have left Syria and settled in Iran since 2011.

But there are simultaneous complexities that nuance the equation of the discussion even further: nuanced complexities that have either totally missed the consideration of Professor Dabashi or perhaps are simply brushed off in silence because they outright contradict his smoke and mirrors *imperial*esque, North American liberal establishment narrative.

First, much of the chatter in Persian language cyberspace seems to indicate that the Jordanians and the Turks appear to have an expressed objection to Iran potentially using their airspace and territory in order to airlift the Syrians located in Turkish and Jordanian refugee centers over to Iran. Of course, less us not forget, both Jordan and Turkey are also known to be covertly supporting one or another of the takfiri death-squad mercenary armies in this war: mercenary takfiri death-squad armies that Iran has helped the governments of Syria and Iraq to combat.

Second, perhaps it has escaped the considered notice of Professor Dabashi that Iran has been under international sanctions for some time now and that its economy is presently in the proverbial doldrums. One correspondent close to Press TV also indicated that many of these present Syrian refugees simply do not want to go to Iran given the sanctions and Iran's present economic situation.

Third, for those Syrian refugees who would possibly seek to come to Iran on their own initiative via the land route from Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey, this would entail them crossing through territory in eastern Syria and western Iraq that is presently being controlled either by ISIS or the other takfiri death-squad, Gog and Magog mercenary armies of Empire (like al-Nusra and the various other armed al-Qaeda

affiliates) which the government of Professor Dabashi's Qatari media benefactor has been actively aiding, abetting, training, arming and fortifying since 2011.

Fourth, given that the Syrian war has spilled over into Iraq, while Iran has been busily fighting against Empire's Mosul-based caliphate ISIS, did it escape the attention of Professor Dabashi that ISIS and other takfiri goons of jihad inc. would be actively seeking to cross into Iran? Has Professor Dabashi conveniently forgotten about the operations of the terrorist Jundullah in southern Iran during the last decade or the murders of Iranian nuclear scientists by Mossad contractors, or the terrorist activities of the MEK during the 1980s? Is he proposing that Iran destabilize itself and throw all caution to the winds by opening its borders wide to all and sundry during wartime, without any consideration whatsoever to the real and fatally dangerous national security threat it would face in so doing: a tangible threat that would witness an explosion by several exponential factors squared of such terrorist incidents occurring inside its own territory like those undertaken by Jundullah, the scientist-murdering Mossad assassins and the MEK? Surely, life in the US east-coast Ivory Tower establishment while hobnobbing the world as an academic celebrity hasn't denuded Professor Dabashi of all sense of geopolitical reality -- or, moreover, common sense? But even with that, Iran has not denied the Syrian refugees or prevented them from coming to Iran.

The regional proxy war, Qatar, Dabashi and Iran

And even with such facts that temper his objections, it seems to have escaped Professor Dabashi that, again, there is an actual war going on in the region as devastating and catastrophic as the Second World War was for Europe: a war which the government of Dabashi's Qatari media benefactor is eyeball-deep involved with, and a proxy war which has very much been targeting Iran from its very inception.

And while we are it, why, exactly, is Hamid Dabashi conspicuously silent over the decisive role played by Qatar in all of this, from its central role in the war itself all the way to its present refusal to take in Syrian refugees? He does not mention the emirate even once in his op-ed! This fact alone simply boggles the mind at the sheer depth of its duplicitous intellectual dishonesty. Who is Hamid Dabashi exactly batting for here with such statements?

He next opines: "...Iran's influence over the conflict in Syria is wide-ranging and direct. The Iranian ruling regime has steadfastly supported Syrian President Bashar al-Assad no matter how murderous his war crimes against Syrian people..."

Yes, indeed, Iran has supported the government of Syria in this imperially initiated, imperially sanctioned and imperially perpetuated conflict that existentially also threatens its own survival -- and as it should be. But what murderous war crimes is Hamid Dabashi referring to, exactly? Would these be the many widely discredited war-crimes attributed to the Assad government which, time and again, instead turned out to be false-flags undertaken by those mercenary hacks of Empire itself, and which Empire has conveniently attempted each time to pin on the Syrian government in order to commence its outright 'humanitarian interventionist' assault, military occupation and balkanization of Syria -- like it did in Iraq, or Libya? In the words of an online friend, "without Iranian support [of Syria and Iraq] Daesh would have overrun Syria [and Iraq] and picked its teeth clean with the bones of Damascus [and Baghdad]. There is no debate." Clearly the war-criminals are Professor Dabashi's benefactors, and not Assad or Iran.

So what planet does the good professor live on; and why not highlight the "murderous...war crimes against the Syrian people" perpetrated by Qatar -- and by the KSA, Turkey, the UAE, Israel, Jordan, the EU, the UK and the United States with their takfiri puppets? Why is responsibility for this conflict being laid almost exclusively at the feet of Iran (and Assad) by Dabashi when all of the evidence incontrovertibly proves beyond any shadow of a doubt and to a moral certainty that such responsibility rightfully falls at the feet of the war-criminals of Empire itself, and particularly the KSA, Qatar, the UAE, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, the EU, the UK, the United States and the mercenary takfiri proxy armies they ultimately control?

Exaggerating for his audience and the accusations of a native informer

Dabashi then bemoans the experience of previous refugee influxes to Iran, claiming, "Iran does not have a particularly rosy record of hospitality towards people who have sought refuge within its borders."

This is, frankly, utter nonsense and quite an unfair, below-the-belt accusation for Dabashi to be making against his own nation. Iran has taken in and settled hundreds-of-thousands of Afghans since the early 1980s. It has taken hundreds-of-thousands of Iraqis who escaped the Saddam regime and the aftermath of the chaos unleashed by the American invasion of 2003. It has also taken countless dissidents and their families from the Gulf kingdoms as well as elsewhere. When was the last time Hamid Dabashi was in Iran to verify the claim he makes? Where does he get his information from, in the first place? From the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) perhaps?

Iranians are by nature a hospitable people (however expat opponents to the current system residing in North America and Europe may mischaracterize it) and its record of hospitality towards refugees is a well established one. Take, for example, the manner in which Iran saved the Iraqi Mandaean population twice: once from the ethnic cleansing of the murderous Iraqi Ba'athists during the eight year war in the 1980s and then later again following the lawless anarchy unleashed in the post-invasion climate of Iraq. Sure, there are problems. But whose record of inhospitality towards refugees is well-established dirt here: is it Iran's or a western secular 'democratic' country like Australia's who detains Iranian asylum seekers inside concentration camps in the island nations of Nauru or Manus Island where these refugees are routinely abused and brutalized by camp guards (take, for example, reports of children – Iranian children! – being raped and sexually abused inside these camps)?

Then, to top it all off, Professor Dabashi hypocritically demonizes and reverse psychologizes Iranian Muslims (blaming the victim!) who complain about Islamophobia in the West, and even has the gall to castigate them for their purported hypocrisy and alleged discrimination of Afghan refugees in Iran. Not that there haven't been incidents or problems in the past, far from it, but here Dabashi is clearly exaggerating his point for the effect on his audience – not to mention for the benefit of his anti-Iranian Qatari media-political benefactors and their narrative. He ought to read his own words from *'Brown Skins, White Masks'* quoted above a few times to realize what he is actually doing (i.e. shilling) when he utters such absurdities, because there is no comparison -- none whatsoever! -- between what is presently sweeping Anglo-European nations and those sporadic, isolated instances occurring in Iran. His is a blatant apples and oranges comparison. But if it is all the same to him, I would invite Professor Dabashi to look deeply into the terrifying rise of the far-right, neo-Nazi, anti-immigration and organized Islamophobia of PEGIDA in Europe (maybe even look into the circumstances behind the current NSU trial underway in Bavaria), the EDL and Britain First in the UK, or the Reclaim Australia/United Patriots Front movement downunder, and then come back and utter such spineless inanities with a straight face -- especially ones directed at his own people. I was utterly gobsmacked to see Hamid Dabashi -- of all people! -- verbatim echoing the talking-points of Islamophobe extraordinaire Pamela Geller in those specific lines. Old school Fascism is on the rise all over the West and Professor Hamid Dabashi blames its targets. Just wow!

Dabashi and the darkside of the Force

A sense of perspective would go a long way with Hamid Dabashi, one which he apparently seems to have lost while shilling for Empire of late. Unfortunately entrenched political interests that op-ed for the Qatari Al Jazeera, together with the opportunistic career-hackery that pulsates within the cut-throat and hyper-politicized corporate environment that is the North American Ivy League Ivory Tower, often works precisely against the acquisition of such a sense of perspective. Be that as it may, make no mistakes, at least with the last op-ed, Dabashi has without a shadow of a doubt proven himself to be a native informer.

It is a real shame that Hamid Dabashi is walking down this path of the darkside of the Force serving the Emperor and the Empire of the Sith because at one time, only a decade ago, he was idolized by many of us as the revamped, twenty-first century Jedi version of the great Jalal Al-e Ahmad with rock solid political integrity to boot. Since a decade ago Dabashi has lost this integrity, and the mojo along with it, becoming a caricature of himself and turning into the very same thing that he publicly railed against in Azar Nafisi. Does he see it himself? Is it karma? Who knows. But perhaps if Hamid Dabashi took a moment and stopped pandering to his overly-Westernized, sycophantic and *faux*-leftist, hipster, bourgeois establishment audience of Al Jazeera's Globalistan, and instead returned to his real native leftwing intellectual roots, like Darth Vader/Anakin Skywalker he would find his way back again to the Light side of the Force.

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[1] <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/09/iran-duty-syrian-refugees-150910081439202.html>